DHRITARASTRA-THE BLIND KING OF HASTINAPURA

Dr. Madhusudan Krishna Das

The word DHRITA implies to possess or sustain something. RASTRA means kingdom. Hence the words DHRITARASTRA means such a king who wants to sustain his kingdom always. That kingdom is everything to him. In other word this means a person who is greedy for a kingdom in his possession always.

In his past life Dhritarastra was a son of Aristev. At that time his name was Hansanama. He was a king of Gandharvas . In next life he came from Vysdeva and Ambika. Ambika was actually the wife of Bichitravirja,the son of Sattabati and Santanu, who were the queen and king ,respectively. But the king died at his youth age. In order to maintain the succession of kingship,Sattavati decided to have Kshtrya Putra(a son who was created through sexual intercourse between Vysdeva and Ambika). At that time this tradition was in practice among the people as well as the king. But at the time of intercourse, Ambika saw the dreadful figure of Vysdeva and out of fear she closed her eyes. As a result Dhritarastra came out of his mother's womb as a blind child. Vysdeva told Sattavati the reason of his blindness.

EDUCATION AND MARRIAGE

Mahamahim Bhishma (he was a son of the king Santanu and had taken a vow not to get married ever) look after the education of Dhritarastra.He studied Veda, became a warrior in terms of club, bow, sword, etc. Again he came to know ethics,history, puranas, etc. with the help of others.

At the youth age he married Gandhari the princess and daughter of the King Subal. Subal was king of the Gandhar(which is also known as Kandahar province of Afganisthan).

At appropriate time Gandhari gave birth to 100 sons and 1 daughter. In addition to this Dhritarastra had a maid-servant. He had a relation with her and a son named Jujusu was born.

DHRITARASTRA COULD NOT BECOME KING DUE TO BLINDNESS

Dhritarastra was blind since the time of birth. As a result his step brother Pandu became the king of Hastinapura(now Delhi).This is why Dhriatarastra became frustrated. His stepbrother Pandu had five Kshtriya sons. They were: Yudhisthir, Bhima,Arjuna, Nakul and Sahadeva. Among them Yudhisthir was senior. Even he was senior to Duryadhana eldest son of Dhritarastra. As a result after the death of Pandu.Yudhisthir would automatically be the king of Hastinapur. All these things created envy among the sons of Dhritarastra, specially in the mind of Duryadhana. But due to the tradition Dhritarastra was bound to declare Yudhisthir as the Yuvraj of Hastinapur (Mahabharat Adi.139.1).Duryodhana expected this but he could not become successful in this case. As a result enemity towards the Pandavas increased to a great extent.

DHRITARASTRA REALLY LOVED PANDU

Dhritarastra had many faults. But he loved his step-brother Pandu. Whenever, he heard that Pandu was going to the forest he became very sad.At that time, he had no desire for any luxurious food, or to sleep. He was thinking about the fate of the Pandu's in the forest. Again when he came to know about the death of Pandu in the jungle, he cried for several days,but at the same had done the spiritual sacrifices for Pandu's welfare.(Mahabharat Adi 119.43,46)

DHRITARASTRA HAD WEAKNESS FOR HIS SONS, SPECIALLY DURYADHANA

Dhritarastra was not only a blindman by birth but really a blind father towards his sons. He loved them very much , specially for Duryadhana and Dushassana. After the birth of Duryadhana , different evil events and news were seen. Vidura his step-brother and even Gandhari advised him to avoid this son, but he did not pay heed to them.(Mahabharat Adi 115.56 and 115.59)

DHRITARASTRA BEGAN TO TAKE STEPS DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY AGAINST THE PANDAVAS

The Pandavas at their youth age and became familiar in all corners and to all people of the Kingdom and efficiency in wars. Bhima and Arjuna attacked different states ; defeated the kings and collected various precious things. As a result their states(kingdom) increased. Seeing and hearing the victory of the Pandavas .Dhritarastra became envious towards them. He consulted with some evil-minded ministers and if possible kill them by hook or by crook.

Dhritarastra, then discussed the matter with Duryadhana, Karna, Dussashana,Shakuni,etc. All of them agreed to the above advises.

(i) First of all Duryadhana tried to kill Bhima by giving him poisonous sweetmeat. Bhima ate those and became unconcious Duryadhana threw Bhima into the river. Bhima entered into patala and was bitten by different snakes. He woke up and was killing the snakes. The king of snakes Basuki came and gave him amrta to drink. Bhima drink as far as possible and he attained such strength of 10000 elephants. After some time he came out to join other four Pandavas.

(ii) Secondly-in Baranabat, a house was made by Lakha and Pandavas could come out at the advises of Vidura (a stepbrother of Dhritarastra but a sincere well wisher of the Pandavas).

(iii) Thirdly at one time Dhritarastra became a doll at the hands of Duryadhana. As a result due to the pressure of him Dhritarastra called the Pandavas from their state (Pandavas were ruling at Indraprastha) to play dice. Pandavas accordingly came. The play began between Sakuni(brother of queen Gandhari) and Yudhisthir. But Yudhisthira was not a good player and as such he lost his kingdom, four brothers and even Draupadi (wife of five Pandavas, daughter of Drupada Raja of Punchal Desha).Drupadi was brought to the assembly hall and at the instruction of Karna and Duryadhana, Dusshana tried to make her naked . But Krishna, upon the prayer of Drupadi supplied millions of clothes so that Dusshana could not disrespect Drupadi. All Pandavas became angry and they promised to kill all the Kauravas one by one in the war field. Dhritarastra feared and at last he returned, but could not punish his idiot sons for all crimes they did with the Pandavas.

(iv) Fourth-again at the request and pressure of Duryadhana . Dhritarastra called the Pandavas to play dice again. At this time also Yudhistir lost all properties including the Kingdom. Additional condition was that the Pandavas would have went to the forest and remained there for 12 years and after that they had to hide for 1 year. If they were caught or identified elsewhere they would have to fulfill the first condition again.

(v) Fifth- Dhritarastra was a man of weak as well as wicked-minded.Whenever Vidura , Drone, Bhishma gave him good advices to Pandavas . He showed his commitment to the throne. But when his sons and Karna create pressures he at once changed his mind and agreed to their proposal for killing of the Pandavas.

(vi) Sixth-Dhritarastra supported every argument and action of his sons in a clever way. When the Pandavas gains something he expressed his satisfaction in front of the Pandavas and Vidura, Drone, Bhishma ,etc. but in alone or in front his sons expressed his sorrowness.

(vii) Seventh- The old, King was actually coward. He feared specially Bhimsen(Mahabharata Uddugparva 51.2).But the proudness of his sons, Karna and Shakuni gave him some consolation.

(viii) Eighth- After fulfilment of the conditions the Pandavas came back and requested. Dhritarastra to return back their kingdom.But Duryadhana said that without war nothing would be returned. As a result war between the two parties was enevitable.At that time Vysdeva came and requested Dhritarastra to stop the war. But he replied : “Father everybody becomes selfish when there is some interest(Mahabharat Bhishma Parva 3.65).From this we can come to know the low as well as henious mentality of Dhritarastra.

(ix) Nineth-War had began Dhrtarastra was hearing continously the failures of his sons against the Pandavas from Sanjoy(he was a minister of Dhritarastra and Vysdeva gave him spiritual eyes to see/observe the results of the war and report those to Dhritarastra).He heard the fall down of Bhisma on the 10^{th} day of the war, killing of Drone,Karna and his 100 sons and so on. He then admit all his sins and cried for his sons.Krishna, Yudhisthir and other well wishes consoled him and Gandhari.Yudhisthir accepted Dhritarastra and Gandhari with due respect and honour. In this way 15 years passed. Dhritarastra decided to go to the Ashrama of Rajarshi Shatarupa in Kurushetra. After staying there for 2 years they entered into a forest.

DEATH OF DHRITARASTRA

Once a davanal starts from the dashing of one tree with another and so on. When they saw this they sat down and engaged in Yuga. Eventually davanal burned them.